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Current Support Brief

CAPABILITY OF SOVIET SEAPORTS TO RECEIVE LARGE IMPORTS OF WHEAT



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CAPABILITY OF SOVIET SEAPORTS
TO RECEIVE LARGE IMPORTS OF WHEAT

The USSR is now committed to import from Canada and Australia more than 8 million metric tons (mt) of wheat and a small quantity of flour by about August 1964, apart from the wheat that it may purchase from the US. The amount of wheat that will have to move through Soviet ports will be reduced, of course, to the extent that Soviet purchases are diverted to the European Satellites. Handling such large tonnages of wheat will create problems for the Soviet railroads and ports and may result in port congestion and create delays in the unloading of ships if voyages are not properly phased. It is nevertheless estimated that Soviet ports are capable of offloading an amount considerably in excess of any amount of wheat that the Soviet authorities may wish to purchase abroad during 1963.

1. General

The USSR has some 115 rail-served seaports, 22 of which are classified as principal ports, 25 as secondary ports, and 68 as minor ports [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In 1962 these ports handled 67 million mt of international trade and 55 million mt of coastal and intercoastal trade for a total of 122 million mt. Only the principal ports have considerable modern facilities for handling cargo. At most of the minor ports, there is very little or no dockage space and no cargo-handling equipment -- which means that ocean-going vessels must be loaded and offloaded in the roadstead by lighters. Only nine of the principal ports are permitted to load and unload foreign-flag vessels, which are expected to carry the bulk of the imported wheat.

Historically the USSR is a grain-exporting rather than a grain-importing nation. In all ports except one, therefore, grain facilities are designed to load rather than to unload grain. These loading facilities cannot be readily adapted for unloading ships, although the elevators

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can be used for grain storage in the ports. Kaliningrad is the only port with modern but limited facilities for unloading grain, and this port is normally closed to foreign-flag vessels. Nakhodka, on the Pacific, is the only port that has received substantial amounts of grain from the Free World in recent years.

2. Unloading Capability of Principal Ports

Only four Soviet ports, all principal ports and all normally open to foreign flag vessels, currently are receiving or are scheduled to receive shipments from Canada and Australia. These ports are Nakhodka on the Pacific, Odessa and Novorossiysk on the Black Sea, and Leningrad on the Baltic Sea. All these ports are ice-free throughout the year except Leningrad, which is kept open for shipping with icebreakers. It is estimated conservatively that a total of about 1.8 million mt of wheat per month can be unloaded at selected facilities in these four ports as follows:

<u>Port</u>	<u>Metric Tons</u>
Nakhodka	426,000
Odessa	555,000
Novorossiysk	310,500
Leningrad	480,000
Total	<u>1,771,500</u>

The total amount able to be imported through the above ports through August 1964 at the rate shown would therefore be about 18 million mt, which would appear to be considerably in excess of any amount of wheat that the USSR may wish to purchase abroad during 1963. In addition, several other ports are available to which traffic may be diverted in the event that problems develop at any of these four ports.

The import of such large tonnages of wheat through these ports would have an impact on the normal domestic and international

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seaborne trade handled by them, but, in computing the above capacities for unloading wheat, only the most suitable berths and cranes for unloading wheat were considered. Therefore, considerable additional capacity remains in each port for handling normal cargoes. Moreover, in computing these capacities, due consideration has been given to the port clearance of shipments by railroad. Thus if the wheat is unloaded wholly or partly from ships into storage areas for subsequent clearance by railroad, the actual unloading rate would be considerably greater.

Analyst:

Coord:



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